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Q5(b)

Would you agree with the contention that India's inclination to lean on a 'more aggressive hyper-realist posture' has gained a new momentum in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terrorist strike? Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics: Nature and major approaches; political economy and political sociology perspectives; limitations of the comparative method.

Core demand of the question

- State the **Pahalgam 2025** strike and the claim of a more aggressive Indian hyper-realism
- Define hyper-realism in Indian FP (**Kautilya**, offensive use of force, signalling)
- **Agree partially:** kinetic and diplomatic hardening is real; it is not India's only register
- Balance with strategic autonomy, US/Russia ties, and costs of permanent crisis

Revision summary

The 2025 Pahalgam attack on tourists in Kashmir invited a harder Indian security response.

Hyper-realism here means more public force, isolation of Pakistan-based terror, and refusal of U.S. Kashmir mediation.

- **The contention is partly right:** the groove since Balakot already ran that way and Pahalgam accelerated it.
- **It is not total:** Russia, the Quad, the EU and economic diplomacy remain other registers.

Agree partially - acceleration, not a new religion of offensive realism.

Introduction

The **Pahalgam terrorist strike of 2025** - tourists killed in the Baisaran meadows of Kashmir - was designed to smear India's security claim in the Valley and to invite a spectacle of revenge. The contention that India then leaned harder into a **hyper-realist posture** is plausible. It is not the whole of Indian foreign policy. A 10-mark comment should **agree in part**.

Body**What hyper-realism means here**

In theory, **realism** already expects self-help. **Hyper-realism**, in the Indian debate, means a thicker willingness to use **cross-border force**, public military signalling, and a lower patience for third-party sermons - **Kautilya**'s danda as first language, **Mearsheimer**'s offensive logic in a nuclear neighbourhood. After Pulwama-**Balakot (2019)** and the 2020s pattern of naming Pakistan-based groups without the old composite-dialogue theatre, Pahalgam fitted an existing groove: punish, isolate, and refuse U.S. **mediation on Kashmir** as a favour.

Where the contention is right

Domestic politics after mass-casualty terror rewards visible toughness. Forces, intelligence, and diplomatic demarches harden together. India can tighten the Indus conversation, the FATF spotlight, and visa and sporting isolation while keeping kinetic options on the table. That is a more aggressive mix than the 1990s 'strategic restraint' **Stephen Cohen** described. **Jaishankar**'s energetic diplomacy is not pacifism; it is activity in the service of a harder core.

Where it is only partial

India did not become a one-note offensive realist. It still buys oil and arms logic from **Russia** while courting the **United States** in the Quad; it still talks **Indo-Pacific** public goods; it still wants EU capital. Hyper-realism toward one adversary can sit beside institutionalism toward others. Permanent crisis also has costs: tourism in Kashmir, investment, and the risk of two-front stress with China on the LAC. Delhi has not emptied the toolbox of talks, covert quiet, and multilateral lawfare.

Pahalgam **accelerated** a posture already in motion since 2016-19. It did not found a new school. Agreement should be **partial**, not a conversion story.

Flow diagram

Pahalgam 2025 -> Harder signalling
Harder signalling -> Kinetic and isolate
Harder signalling -> Still multi-aligned
Still multi-aligned -> Partial not total hyper-realism

Conclusion

After Pahalgam, India looked more hyper-realist because terror politics punishes hesitation. The lean is real toward Pakistan-facing force and refusal of mediation. It is not the sum of a foreign policy that still needs markets, Russia, the U.S. and a usable Valley.

Facts & figures

Pahalgam 2025

Mass-casualty terrorist attack on visitors in the Pahalgam area of Jammu and Kashmir, a political as well as security shock.

Balakot 2019

Precedent for public cross-border air signalling after Pulwama; the groove Pahalgam reopened.

No mediation

India treats Kashmir as bilateral; U.S. offers of good offices are refused as a matter of doctrine, not mood.